

St Nicholas Parish Church, Prestwick

Thought for the Week

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Unfortunately, I did not inherit my mother's and father's genes for gardening. They were both very keen indeed. And over my forty years in the Ministry, in each of my churches – in Neilston, Girvan and Ayr – the Manse had an extensive garden! I was fortunate enough to get some help to assist in maintaining the policies, with their apple trees and herbaceous borders and large swathes of lawn. Now that I have retired and moved into a much smaller house, I am more than thrilled (and relieved!) with the attractive garden and have actually become quite enthusiastic in pottering around, planting and acquainting myself with the names of various species of flowers and bushes, which hitherto, completely eluded me! I realise that I will never be a Monty Don or an Alan Titchmarsh, but these past two summers, I am delighted at the profusion of colour that is produced thanks to my determined efforts – the agapanthus, the roses, the antirrhinums, the hebes, the azalea, the ladies' mantle, and various other species which brighten up my day.

I have planted and watered and weeded and fed and tended, and the outcome has been mainly successful, with a few disappointments.

Jesus told a story about sowing seed and how it fared depending on the type of soil on which it landed.

And one of the main points of this parable that He told is that it is not our responsibility to worry about the fate of the seed. Our job is just to keep sowing. Jesus does not focus our attention on the seed that was lost in the stony ground or was burnt up in the noonday sun or was choked by the weeds – He emphasises the seed that brings forth results.

The late Professor William Barclay, of blessed memory, a great saint of the Church and communicator of the Gospel, used to ask his students studying for the Ministry in the New Testament Class at Trinity College in Glasgow, "Who was Albert Einstein's arithmetic teacher in Second Year? Who was Ignace Paderewski's piano teacher? Who was Billy Graham's Minister when he was a boy sitting in Church?"

You can see what he was getting at with his questions.

Who planted the seeds of future greatness?

How small the beginnings, how great the outcome.

When President Abraham Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin", he remarked, "So this is the little lady who started the big war."

What are we as a congregation planting in the life of our parish, our town? What "big war" are we seeding?

Who made you and me what we are? Who put value, meaning, grace and love into our lives?

The Parable of the Sower demands quite simply that you and I sow seed that will germinate and blossom and fill the world with love and forgiveness and compassion.

You know, Friends, it is not for us to worry about the future of the Church. Our business is quite simply to go on scattering our seeds of faith and hope and love wherever we can, for without us, there would be less of God's splendour in our world.

Let's get on with our sowing – just leave the rest to God.

The Revd Fraser R Aitken, Locum Minister